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Environmental
assessment for
Maidenrock Fishing
Access Site
grazing management
plan

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Environmental Assessment

for

Maidenrock Fishing Access Site Grazing Management Plan

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
August 1999

Environmental Assessment

for

Maidenrock Fishing Access Site Grazing Management Plan

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
August 1999

10-12-22

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MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action** Limited livestock grazing on a fishing access site along the Big Hole River

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action** Montana Code Annotated, 87-1-303(1), 87-1-209(5)

3. **Name of Project** Maidenrock Fishing Access Site Grazing Management Plan

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

5. **If Applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date December 1999

Estimated Completion Date December 2009 (1 year lease with 9 renewals possible)

Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 90%

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

Maidenrock Fishing Access Site approximately 6 miles northwest of Melrose, Montana, Beaverhead County, T2S, R9W, Sections 10, 15 and 22. Total acreage = 196 acres.

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:
residential _ acres
industrial _ acres

(d) Floodplain _ acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation 50 acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland _ acres
dry cropland _ acres
forestry _ acres
rangeland 100 acres
other _ acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas 46 acres

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

See Figure 1.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing to re-issue a formal grazing plan (Attachment 1) at Maidenrock Fishing Access Site (FAS) which lies along the Big Hole River near Melrose,

Montana. This site has some recreational development including a gravel boat ramp, drinking water, informal campsites and picnic tables, and three latrines. This fishing access site is primarily used for camping and fishing.

Annual grazing, as outlined by the attached plan, will be on a pasture rotational system for a total of eight days during December with a maximum of 240 cattle (cows) on a given pasture. Visitation is low during this winter month, river banks are usually frozen, and vegetation is dormant. The short duration of the annual grazing will limit impacts on the environment, yet encourage early season "green-up" which benefits foraging wildlife. The livestock operator will also benefit from needed grazing pasture. The plan will help maintain a renewable resource in respect to it's productivity and profitability.

The FWP Range Coordinator evaluated the grazing system in April 1999 and recommended continuing the existing plan, noting that most of the land consists of cultivated grasses originally planted for hay production and irrigated livestock pasture. Good ground cover remains in the area except where high recreational use or parking occurs from the FAS visitors.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

Agency Name _____ Permit _____ Date Filed/# _____

None

(b) Funding:

Agency Name _____ Funding Amount _____

FWP FAS Operations and Maintenance Force Account (refer to page 10)

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name _____ Type of Responsibility _____

None

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

FWP - Parks Division
 State Historical Preservation Office Liason
 Fisheries Division
 Non-Game/Endangered Species Biologist
 Range Coordinator

Montana Natural Heritage Program - Natural Resources Information Services (NRIS)

FIGURE 1

Maidenrock FAS Location Map

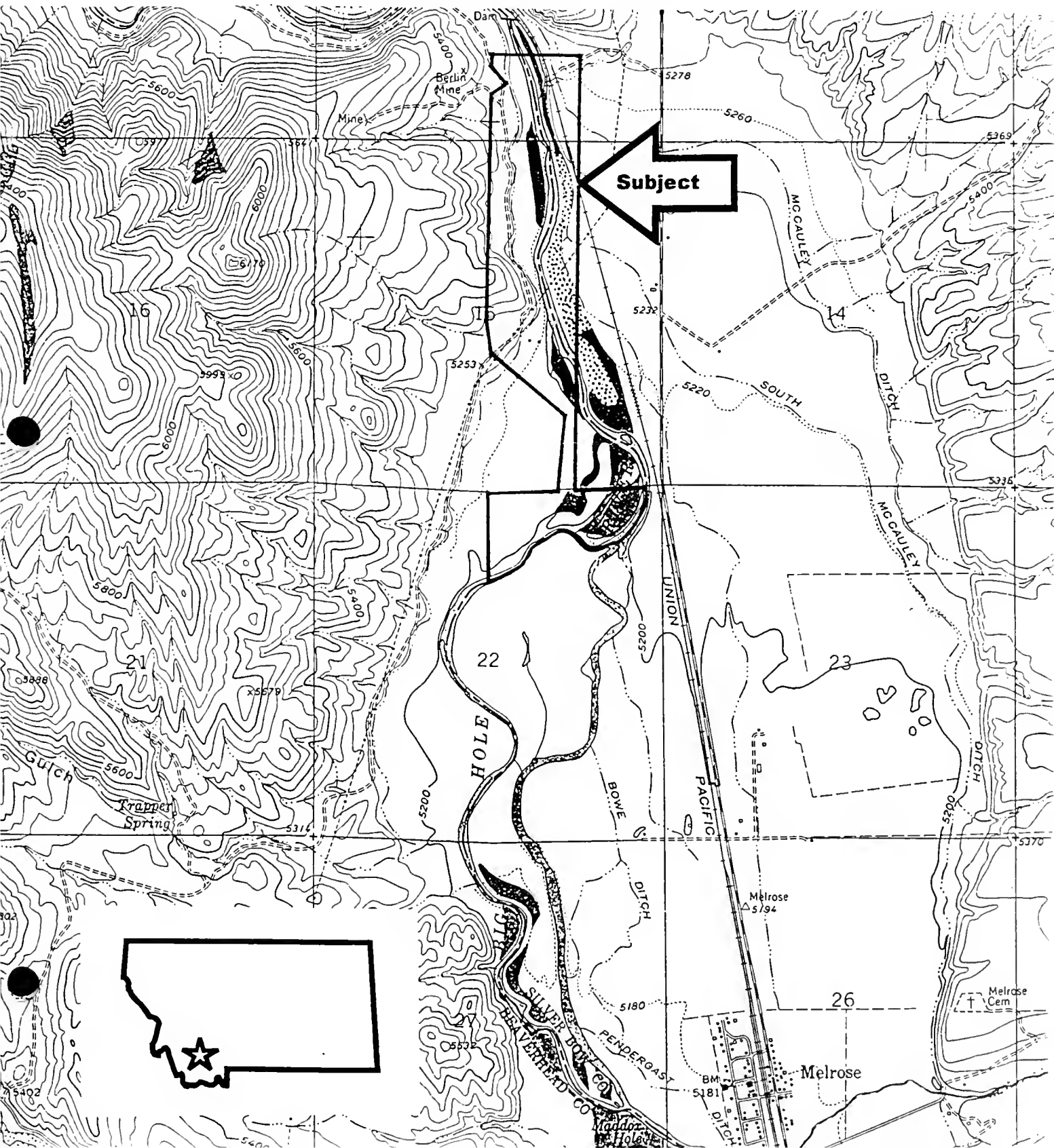
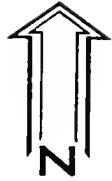
Approximate property boundaries

Entire FAS = 196 acres

7.5 Minute Topographic USGS Melrose Quadrangle, 1961

Beaverhead County, MT

T2S, R9W, Sections 10, 15 & 22



PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
▶ a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
▶ c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other <u>N/A</u>						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. No changes in soil stability or geologic substructure will occur from a grazing plan of this size.

1c. No unique geologic or physical features will be destroyed, covered or modified.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
▶ a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ♦ For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		N/A				
f. Other <u>N/A</u>						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Ambient air quality is not expected to change due to the proposed plan.

o Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

▶ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact ^o Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
► a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		N/A				
m. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		N/A				
n. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. No changes in surface water quality are anticipated.

♦♦ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

► Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT [☆]				Can Impact Be Mitigated [☆]	Comment Index
	Unknown [☆]	None	Minor [☆]	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. Some short term, minor vegetative impacts will occur during and immediately after the intense grazing period. The vegetative growing season will not be affected since the proposed grazing will be in the winter. The removal of dead vegetation through grazing will help stimulate early season plant growth. As noted above by the FWP Range Coordinator, much of the land addressed by the grazing plan consists of cultivated grasses originally planted for hay production or irrigated livestock pasture.

4c. A search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program revealed no threatened or endangered species in the area of the proposed grazing plan. Dwarf Phacelia (*Phacelia scopulina*) was recorded over a mile away, but was last observed in 1885. This species is not listed or proposed to be listed on the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Endangered Species list and is considered globally secure. In Montana, the Dwarf Phacelia is only known from records over 50 years ago.

☆ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not been evaluated.

► Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

▶ 5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5b.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		N/A				
i. ♦For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		N/A				
j. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Grazing by it's nature will create some competition for wildlife who depend on the same food sources in winter. The limited extent of this plan, however, may benefit grazing wildlife overall in that the action will encourage early green up in Spring.

5b. The short-term intense grazing proposed will likely displace some game and non-game species for a period of eight days or more. Most species will return soon after the cattle are removed from the property.

5f. Correspondence with FWP non-game coordinator (6/14/99), and a search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program - revealed no threatened or endangered species which would be impacted by this grazing plan. The FWP fisheries biologist for this area indicated that fish species occurring in this stretch of the Big Hole River will not be impacted by the proposed action, including the arctic grayling and west-slope cutthroat, which are Montana Species of Special Concern.

♦♦♦♦♦ Provide a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

♦♦♦♦♦ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦♦♦♦♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦♦♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. Minor and temporary noise levels will increase locally from the natural sounds of large numbers of cattle in a confined area.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- ✧ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or not be evaluated.
 ▶ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
 ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
 ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ♦For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

♦ Provide a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

♦ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
a. Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?			X (positive)			10b.
c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
► e. Define projected revenue sources						10e.
► f. Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10b. FWP will receive compensation from a private livestock operator for the use of this pasture land.

10e. Revenue from the pasture lease will come from a private operator and enter the FWP Fishing Access Site Earned Revenue Account. Annual revenue is expected to be between \$400 and \$600, though exact amounts are unknown until bids are submitted and opened.

10f. Maintenance costs due to the proposed grazing will be negligible since the leasee is responsible for maintaining fences, etc. There will be minimal administrative costs each year for contract renewal and fee remittance (approximately \$200 annually).

^o Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

► Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

▶ 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X			11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			X			11b.
▶ c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings?			X			11c.
d. ♦For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		N/A				
e. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The aesthetics and recreational nature of the area will not greatly change due to 240 cattle grazing on this FAS for a maximum of eight days in December when visitation is at its lowest. Cattle are a common sight in the Big Hole valley.

11a. One comment has been received by FWP personnel from a cabin owner adjacent to the pasture. This owner was disgruntled with the aesthetic effects of the cow manure in the pasture and claimed that it caused objectionable odors in the summer.

11b. Temporary changes will occur to the aesthetic character of the area during the eight days when cattle are allowed in the pasture, however this is during the winter month of December when outdoor human activity is usually at its lowest.

11c. The grazing plan does not affect the recreational opportunities available to the public. Minor objections may occur from people using the day-use and camping areas due to manure in these areas, however cattle will inhabit these pastures for one day, minimizing the amount of waste deposited in the high-use areas.

♦ Provide a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

▶ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
► a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		N/A				
e. Other: _____ N/A _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. The fishing access site includes four historic structures which the cattle can come in contact with, but cannot enter. These structures are not expected to be impacted by the proposed grazing plan. Another cultural site has been identified on the east side of the Big Hole River which is not part of the grazing plan. These sites are not expected to be impacted by the proposed action.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT ^o				Can Impact Be Mitigated ^o	Comment Index
	Unknown ^o	None	Minor ^o	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ♦For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		N/A				
g. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

^o Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or not be evaluated.

► Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A. No Action: Discontinue All Livestock Grazing on FAS

Implementation of the no action alternative would not utilize a renewable resource available to FWP and livestock operators. The aesthetic concerns, however, would be abated and any impacts on wildlife due to displacement or habitat destruction. Certain benefits do occur from limited grazing, such as removal of dead vegetation, and early spring vegetative growth. These benefits would not be realized if all grazing stopped. Grazing over the last five years have not illustrated negative impacts on the vegetation as evaluated by the FWP Range Coordinator.

Alternative B. Graze Pasture A & B Only

This alternative would allow a livestock operator to benefit from the majority of available grazing pasture, but would alleviate aesthetic concerns in the high use area, Pasture C. The available pasture and usable vegetation in Pasture C is limited, thus only one day of grazing is allowed in this area. It is primarily used as a corridor between larger pastures A and B, thus impacts to Pasture C are few and temporary. To block grazing in this area would make moving of cattle within the fishing access site difficult.

Alternative C. Preferred Alternative to Graze Three Pastures as Outlined in the Grazing Management Plan

The Maidenrock FAS Grazing Management Plan efficiently uses available livestock pasture with minimal impacts. The time of year and duration of the plan minimize impacts on wildlife and aesthetic concerns. The FAS is structured such that use of Pasture C is necessary to connect the two larger pastures. This area is limited to one day of grazing to limit impacts here.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

If the grazing plan/contract is not followed by the livestock operator, FWP has the option to discontinue grazing on this property or grant the lease to another responsible grazing operator.

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

This review has clearly demonstrated that the impacts associated with this project are not significant. Due to the insignificant negative impacts of this proposed action, an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action, and alternatives:

- ▶ three (3) legal notices, one notice published in each of these three newspapers: Montana Standard (Butte), Dillon Tribune, and the Helena Independent Record,
- ▶ 1 legal notice on Montana's electronic bulletin board,
- ▶ 1 statewide press release.

The opportunities for public input listed above are appropriate for the proposed project since little or no environmental impacts are identified, no substantial public controversy is expected and House Bill 495 (Attachment 2) is not in effect for this project.

6. Duration of comment period if any:

Comments will be accepted for thirty (30) days following the publication of the legal notice. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., September 9, 1999 and can be mailed to the address below:

Maidenrock FAS Grazing Plan
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718

7. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Sue Dalbey
Independent Contractor
Dalbey Resources
926 N. Lamborn St.
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-8058

Tom Greason
Parks Maintenance Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-6987

Jerry Walker
State Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-3552

Mike Frisina
Range Coordinator
1330 W. Gold
Butte, MT 59701-2112
406-782-2060

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed grazing management plan is a continuation of a plan implemented in 1993. The Range Coordinator for FWP has evaluated the impacts of the grazing for the past six (6) years and determined that the plan achieved the desired results without negatively impacting the site. The plan seems to make economical sense for both parties involved, FWP and the livestock operator, without significantly impacting the environment for humans, wildlife or vegetation.

No potentially significant impacts were identified in Part II of this EA. No unique cultural, geologic or physical features will be affected. No threatened or endangered species will be disturbed. Wetlands or prime farmland will not be affected. Cultural sites will not be impacted. The small nature of the project results in no cumulative negative impacts on the site.

Attachments:

1. Grazing Management Plan
2. HB495 Exemption Form

ATTACHMENT 1

GRAZING MANAGEMENT PLAN MAIDENROCK FISHING ACCESS SITE

Statement of Purpose/Background

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to engage in a formal, long-term livestock (cattle) winter grazing plan program at Maidenrock Fishing Access Site beginning in December, 1999. The primary purpose of this action is to maintain or enhance the ecological condition of the rangeland resource and stimulate early season "green up" for the benefit of wildlife. Earlier season plant "green up" will benefit foraging wildlife in a time of need. A secondary objective of this plan is to engage in a long-term, controlled grazing program which takes place during our off-season, public visitor use period, while at the same time offers an adjacent livestock operator needed grazing pasture.

Description of Lands Involved

Maidenrock Fishing Access Site is a 196 acre recreation area situated on the Big Hole River approximately six road miles northwest of Melrose, Montana. This site lies in Sections 10, 15 and 22, T2S, R9W.

Under this grazing plan, roughly 150 acres of this site will be utilized for livestock in a combination of three different pastures. These pastures, along with the area's boundaries, are indicated on the attached map, Exhibit A. All three of the pastures designated for grazing lie west and adjacent to the Big Hole River. Pasture B does not, however, adjoin the river on its east boundary, but is defined by an old fence line. The site is bounded by the main river to the north (major river bend) and by a side channel to the south. To the west, the site borders BLM land in Pasture A and private lands in Pastures B and C. The area is accessed by a Beaverhead County road from Melrose to the entrance and internal roads continue to the north and south.

This site contains three vault toilets, eight picnic tables, one boat ramp, one drinking water well/pump, five older log structures and numerous, undesignated camping spots for the recreating public. This is a light to moderately used area with most visitation occurring between May and November.

Grazing Plan

A yearly, rotational grazing system will be used for all three pastures, with total carrying capacity and the grazing period being the limiting factors. Each pasture will be allowed a specific (maximum) number of AUM's (Animal Unit Months) within a certain time frame. The three pastures are designated on the attached map, Exhibit A. The details of the proposed plan are outlined in the table on the following page.

PASTURE	AUM's	DAYS	MAXIMUM # OF COWS
A	40	5	240
B	20	2 1/2	240
C	8	1	240

Grazing will be limited to the winter month of December, with all grazing done in one short, intense period. The primary objective of enhancing plant succession without major impacts will be best met by restricting use to this period.

The type of livestock to be used for grazing will be limited to cattle (cows). Domestic sheep grazing is not desirable because of the close proximity of a healthy bighorn sheep herd and the potential for disease transmittal. Also, a short, intense grazing period, with high numbers of livestock, is a less-than-ideal scenario for horse pasturing.

Historically, Pasture A has been grazed most recently and most frequently. Pasture A will be monitored for compliance and condition on a yearly basis. Native sage species and watering areas will be observed closely. Pastures B and C will be monitored for compliance. Pasture C has the most human use and development and will be evaluated each year for aesthetic impacts and visitor reactions. This area could be excluded in subsequent years if impacts are too severe.

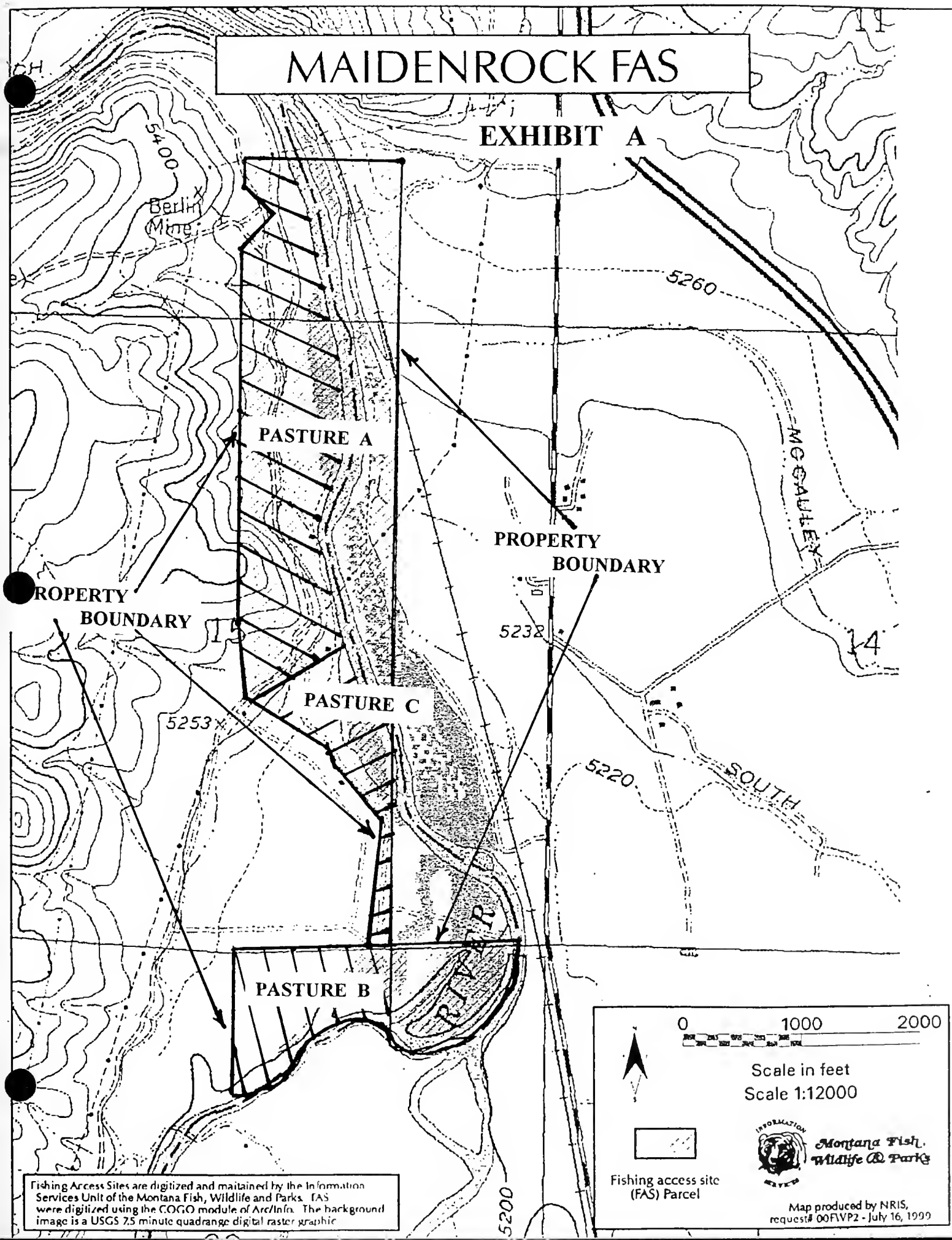
MFWP will in general, continuously monitor pasture condition (photo/vegetative plots) and will alter stocking rates as necessary.

Additional Details and Considerations

Fencing is, for the most part, in place, but will need periodic maintenance and repair. Where pastures border the river, it is assumed that the water will act as a natural barrier. Also, all log structures will be blocked/fenced to prohibit damage by livestock. Pasture C will need to be "dragged" each spring to break up and dispense the manure accumulation.

MAIDENROCK FAS

EXHIBIT A



Fishing Access Sites are digitized and maintained by the Information Services Unit of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. FAS were digitized using the COGO module of Arc/Info. The background image is a USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle digital raster graphic.

Fishing access site
(FAS) Parcel



Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks

Map produced by NRIS,
request# 00FVFP2 - July 16, 1999

ATTACHMENT 2

HB495 Exemption Form Maidenrock FAS Grazing Management Plan

Use this form when a park improvement or development project meets the criteria identified in 12.8.602 (1) ARM, but determined to NOT significantly change park features or use patterns.

State Park or Fishing Access Site Project Description: Limited livestock grazing on Maidenrock Fishing Access Site

The improvement or development project does not significantly change park or fishing access site features or use patterns. Provide the reason for exemption across from the appropriate item.

12.8.602 (ARM) (1)	Reason for Exemption
(a) Roads/trails	None
(b) Buildings	None
(c) Excavation	None
(d) Parking	None
(e) Shoreline alterations	None
(f) Construction into water bodies	None
(g) Construction w/impacts on cultural artifacts	None
(h) Underground utilities	None
(i) Campground expansion	None

Some activities considered that do not significantly impact site features or use patterns are: signing, fencing, barriers, road grading, garbage collection, routine latrine and facility maintenance.

Signature Susan E. Dalbey Date 6/14/99

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Environmental
Assessment for
Underrock Fishing
Access Site
grazing management
plan

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